



TIMELESS *elegance* SOPHISTICATED *style*

By Tori Phelps

These days, everyone wants to talk about interior design. At least, everyone Susan Lovelace interacts with. From her dentist to her nail tech, she's constantly peppered with questions about what's new, what's hot, and, of course, any pro tips she's willing to divulge. If you think she's unhappy about that, think again. Lovelace is thrilled that her life's passion has grabbed hold of the entire population (thanks, HGTV!) and has decided to make it easier than ever for people to indulge their decor dreams.

As owner of the Emerald Coast design and home furnishings institution Lovelace Interiors, Lovelace has been an interior designer for longer than she's willing to divulge—at least in print. But she remains obsessed with the field and with creating new experiences. Among her latest projects: an innovative

online experience for shoppers and a program aimed at fellow interior designers.

The Lovelace Interiors website has always been a source of inspiration, in a browse-and-drool kind of way. But Lovelace wants to make it possible for customers to shop the team's professionally styled looks from home with an integrated online shopping cart. "You'll be able to purchase single items—a lamp or a throw, for example—or get 'the Lovelace Look,'" she explains.

The Lovelace Look offers the opportunity to purchase an entire room, from the sofa to the candles on the coffee table, exactly as Lovelace Interiors has it staged. It's a fairly common occurrence in the brick-and-mortar store, Lovelace says, which is what sparked the idea for the online shop.

Left: Design trends are steering toward midcentury modern flair mixed with a contemporary edge, as seen here in the Lovelace showroom. Changing the accent color can easily create a completely different look.

Photo by Colleen Duffley

Right: Shop the Lovelace showroom for statement upholstery in unexpected colors and textures. (Contrary to popular belief, velvet is a very durable fabric!)

Photo by Colleen Duffley

Below: Design associate Alden Lagasse (right) has a personal design style using a mix of old and new. She has a love for antiques and original art, forming character and design interest throughout her homes.

Pictured here with principal designer Susan Lovelace (left).

Photo by Romona Robbins

The “looks” cater to multiple design aesthetics, offering groupings based around current color trends (this season is blush, by the way), as well as perennial Gulf Coast favorites such as cerulean blue, aqua, and teal. And customers will see styles ranging from transitional to ultracontemporary.

Naturally, shoppers get the best deal on an entire look, but prices on single items are surprisingly affordable. “You can’t buy these high-end, premium-quality goods anywhere for the price we’re selling them,” she says.

Which may be why fellow interior designers are dying to get their hands on Lovelace’s sources. And, incredibly, Lovelace is letting them. Through her new “Lovelace to the Trade” program, independent interior designers can access lines they wouldn’t ordinarily

FAMILIAR TO MOST AS THE WIFE OF CELEBRITY CHEF AND RESTAURATEUR EMERIL LAGASSE, MRS. LAGASSE NOT ONLY HELPS RUN THE COUPLE’S PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATION, BUT SHE’S ALSO A POWERHOUSE INTERIOR DESIGNER WHO RECENTLY ADDED “LOVELACE ASSOCIATE” TO HER RÉSUMÉ.

be able to—at exclusive, discounted prices—and even bring their clients to her resource room. Sound crazy? Not to Lovelace, who started out as a freelancer herself. “Most work out of their own homes and don’t have the volume for the 150 vendors that we stock,” she explains.

That kind of generosity is typical of Lovelace, according to Alden Lagasse. Familiar to most as the wife of celebrity chef and restaurateur Emeril Lagasse, Mrs. Lagasse not only helps run the couple’s philanthropic foundation, but she’s also a powerhouse interior designer who recently added “Lovelace associate” to her résumé.

The two women have known each other since Lagasse was a girl. After marrying Lagasse’s cousin, Lovelace became a combination big sister and mentor to Lagasse, who frequently stayed with her cousins while on breaks from Ole Miss. “I remember thinking, ‘I want a house just like hers when I grow up,’” Lagasse recalls. “And now I live in her house.”

When the couples swapped houses a few years ago, Lagasse went to work making the long-coveted space her own. Rather than the Florida-Mediterranean feel common to the area, Lagasse’s house boasts an old-world New Orleans style that reflects her Southern roots. “She’s made it so beautiful,” Lovelace enthuses. “She’s incredibly talented.”





Great design always uses a variety of textures and patterns. Lovelace designer Cara McBroom kept the colors cohesive yet eye-catching in this open-concept living space.

Photo by Steve Mangum

Lovelace knew early on that her cousin had something special and has actively encouraged that innate talent. In recent years, Lagasse has turned into an in-demand designer, making an associate position a natural next step—even if it's not full-time just yet.

With a twelve-year-old and a fourteen-year-old in school and a husband always on the go, Lagasse's time is limited. But design isn't something she's willing to give up. "I've loved design my whole life, and I'm constantly redecorating. My husband is like, "Thank God we have these restaurants she can do," Lagasse laughs.

The Emeril empire now includes thirteen restaurants, and Lagasse immerses herself completely in their design—like Miramar Beach's new Emeril's Coastal Italian. Not surprisingly, she asked her favorite design partner, Lovelace, to lend a hand as well as her commercial design license.

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Though the two have wildly different aesthetics, they work together seamlessly and joyfully. It took both of them, architects Geoff Chick and Jeff Margaretten, and a good chunk of the Lovelace team to create an interior that did justice to Emeril's concept of Italian favorites meet coastal freshness. Lagasse started with what she knew for sure: the tone had to be casual but elegant. And because she was going for an Italian-infused ambience, she skipped the usual blues and settled on a palette of grays with pops of corn-silk yellow.

Teamwork

MAKES THE DREAM WORK

It might be her name on the letterhead, but Susan Lovelace is the first to acknowledge that Lovelace Interiors is a group effort. And that confidence in her world-class team is what has finally allowed her to take time off once in a while.

But the show (or store, in this case) must go on.

To maintain the firm's iconic status, she relies on staffers like Brooke Williams, Lovelace's assistant-turned-interior design associate. "Brooke is so talented, and she's the hardest-working person I've ever known," Lovelace says.

Then there are Bunny Hall and Helene Forester, the showroom designer and assistant, respectively, responsible for the store's "wow" factor. "They make a great design duo, and the floor wouldn't be as stunning on a daily basis without them," Lovelace says.

The rest of the team is equally impressive: fifteen-year veteran Cassidy Lyons Pickens ("executes high-end

WHETHER IT'S A NEWBIE SHE GETS TO WATCH BLOSSOM OR A VETERAN WHO'S PART OF THE VERY FABRIC OF LOVELACE DESIGNS, LOVELACE IS LIKE A PROUD MAMA WHEN IT COMES TO HER TEAM.

projects with great ease"), Lindsay Miller ("a very talented designer who's worked on some of the largest projects the firm has done"), Karen Kerns ("a great eye and very professional"), Cara McBroom ("when we all design our own homes, we want Cara to help us with the process"), Linda Holman ("tried to retire about three times now, but the projects just pile on heavier for her"), Brooks Logan ("a keen eye for detail, and her hand renderings are absolutely beautiful"), and Amber Miller ("my newest assistant, learning all the sides to residential design"). Lovelace says she is also proud to add three new designers to her roster this year: Donna Callahan, Joy Adams, and Stephanie Schefano.

Whether it's a newbie she gets to watch blossom or a veteran who's part of the very fabric of Lovelace Designs, Lovelace is like a proud mama when it comes to her team. "The group of designers we have now is the most talented I've ever seen," she raves. "They do an incredible job, and I never worry about taking a day off."



Lovelace Interiors has over ten talented designers to assist with your design needs. Clients can purchase directly off the floor or special order exactly what they have in mind.

Photo by Romona Robbins

But it wasn't until she brought in artist Landon Lott that everything started taking shape. Lott, a family friend who had created stunning spray paint murals for their New Orleans' restaurant, Meril, agreed to do similar large-scale artwork for Emeril's Coastal Italian. From Lott's concepts, Lagasse selected an octopus and langoustine, to which Lott added Roman architectural elements and fish found in Gulf waters. "They look 3-D—almost like Mardi Gras floats to me," Lagasse says of Lott's creations. "After Landon painted those, we really got inspired with things like Kelly Wearstler chandeliers that resemble gold sea urchins."

From the beginning, Lovelace was determined that the design and furnishings of Emeril's Coastal Italian would be stunning. "It's probably over-the-top beautiful," she admits. "But Alden and Emeril have fabulous taste, and it had to be up to the standards of their other restaurants, which aren't just about the food, but the whole experience. That's why Emeril is the master."

And Lovelace, of course, is the master of design. Perhaps it's because she's so renowned for her skills that she still fights the misconception that Lovelace Interiors sells services, not products. The truth is that they do both. Yes, their crew of licensed



Use different patterns in a monochromatic color scheme for an intriguing design. The showroom always has a large selection of pillows in a variety of colors and patterns.

Photo by Colleen Duffley

A calm and relaxing master bathroom is the ideal retreat! Designer Linda Holman used a combination of neutrals to create a classic design that's easy on the eyes.

Photo by Colleen Duffley



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designers tackles massive projects for clients. But those same designers are available to help patrons shop the well-stocked showroom floor—at no cost.

And that showroom floor, unparalleled in its selection, has never been more inspiring. “Right now, we have the most amazing products we’ve ever had,” Lovelace says. “You would think that I would be jaded after doing this for so long, but the designs just keep getting better and more beautiful.” ▣

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